RAILROAD SLIDE SPECIAL OF THE MONTH

GOLDEN SPIKE CENTENNIAL SHOW

Six beautiful 35 mm color slides of the S. P. railroad exhibit at Sacramento, May 1969, featuring original Central Pacific and Southern Pacific locomotives.

1. Central Pacific #1, the "Gov. Stanford," side view.
2. Virginia & Truckee #21, the "J. W. Bowker."
3. Central Pacific #1, the "Gov. Stanford," front view.
4. Last remaining S. P. cab-forward steam locomotive.
5. S. P. Gold Spike and Centennial Plaque Special trains side by side, showing dome and observation cars.
6. Centennial Plaque Special climbing Donner Pass in snow.

This slide set only $1.50 for orders postmarked before Jan. 1. Request set X-6. (Californians add sales tax.)

MESSAGE MEDIA, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

The next issue of RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER will be dated December 21, 1970

TO:

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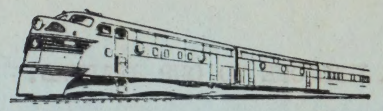
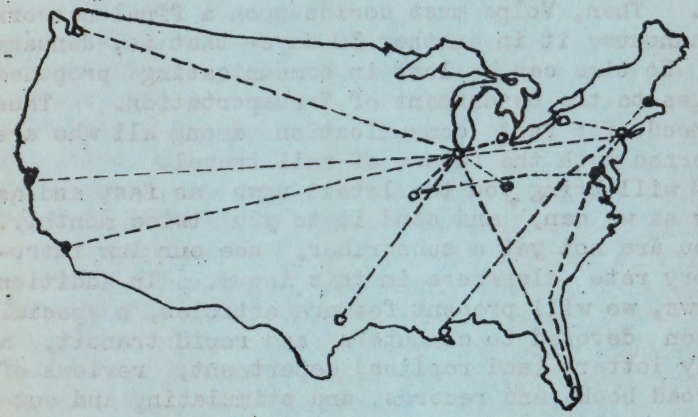
FIRST CLASS MAIL

RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER



TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY ANNOUNCES PRELIMINARY "BARE-BONES" RAIL NETWORK



Department of Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe announced on November 30 a basic network of passenger trains to be operated beginning next May 1 by the newly created Rail Passenger Corporation (Railpax). There will be 16 routes connecting 14 major cities. The proposal raised immediate criticism from public spokesmen. See full story inside.

Nationwide rail strike threatened for December 10. See story inside.

VOL. 1 DECEMBER 7, 1970 NO. 1

A WELCOME TO OUR READERS!

WE'D planned an elaborate editorial to explain the purposes of RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER, but our comments would be superfluous now. It's obvious that a period of crisis and great historical change has descended upon the American rail passenger scene. By happenstance, our first issue coincides with the public announcement of the most sweeping changes in history in U. S. passenger service. Congress has passed the bill to create the Rail Passenger Corporation to run all the passenger trains except commuters, and a preliminary skeleton network of runs was made public by Secretary Volpe (see map on front page). By law, the public has 30 days from the Nov. 30 announcement date to suggest changes before the system is finalized. Then, Volpe must decide upon a final network and announce it in another 30 days--that is, January 29. No time can be lost in communicating proposed changes to the Department of Transportation. Thus the need for fast communication among all who are concerned with the future of rail travel.

RTN will bring you the latest news as fast and as fully as we can, and send it to you twice monthly. If you are not yet a subscriber, see our low introductory rate elsewhere in this issue. In addition to news, we will present feature articles, a special section devoted to commuters and rapid transit, a lively letters (and replies) department, reviews of railroad books and records, and stimulating and outspoken commentary.

We urge you to make your views about passenger service known now. Since the governmental bureaucracy gives more weight to organized pressure groups than to individuals, the best way to communicate your feelings is through an organization such as the National Association of Railroad Passengers. NARP's address is 417 New Jersey Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003 (Phone 202-546-1550). Time is of the essence.

Rail Travel Newsletter is published 24 times a year, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month, by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, CA 94709. Yearly subscription $4.00, 25¢/copy. Editor: James Russell.

Proposed Rail Network Stirs Criticism

No one seems to know exactly how many intercity passenger trains are now running--somewhere near 366 is a good guess. But that number will be reduced to 150 if the rail network proposed by Secretary of DOT John Volpe is not modified. The semi-public Railpax organization is empowered by Congress to control the trains in the network specified starting May 1. The system as first announced is a sort of fan with arms radiating from Chicago, and several from New York.

The 16 routes proposed are Boston-New York, Washington-New York, New York-Buffalo, Detroit-Chicago, Chicago-Cincinnati, St. Louis-Chicago, New York-Miami, Chicago-Miami, New York-New Orleans, New York-Chicago, Washington-St. Louis, Chicago-Houston, Chicago-New Orleans, Seattle-Chicago, San Francisco-Chicago, and Los Angeles-Chicago.

Prominently missing from the network are all intercity connections presently available in the Northwest, West, and Southwest. Seattle-Vancouver, Portland-Seattle, San Francisco-Portland, Los Angeles-SanFrancisco, and San Diego-Los Angeles runs are not in the network, as well as the famous Sunset route from Los Angeles-New Orleans. Several major cities now served by trains will have no rail service at all. These include San Diego, Portland, Denver, Phoenix, San Antonio, El Paso, Atlanta, and Minneapolis.

Immediate criticism came strongly from many sources. New York Times columnist Tom Wicker sharply criticized the plan, calling it a "product of cost-cutters in the Administration who held down the scope of the system." The Railpax system is expected to turn a profit in two years, after which unprofitable runs could be cut out. Wicker pointed out that no new equipment can be expected for two years, however, so that one of the major elements expected to stimulate passenger use will be lacking during the time the system is having its first evaluation. Wicker also struck out at the "outsize preference" Congress and the Administration give to the highways and the airlines.

In an editorial entitled "Rail renaissance in reverse?" the Christian Science Monitor attacked some basic assumptions of Railpax: "Whence the notion that 'profitability' is the sole criterion for determining a nation's transportation policy? How does one measure the annual return on investment of the road and highway networks, still consuming billions? Or the profitability of taxpayer investment in the air transport industry? The issue is not so much profitability ... but more simply of priorities." The editorial added that "road and air congestion is getting to be such that the logic of a rail renaissance cannot be much longer avoided."

Sen. Warren Magnuson of Washington, chairman of the Commerce Committee that helped set up Railpax, asked that high-speed corridor service be set up between Seattle and Portland. Presently 3 trains a day run that route. Anthony Haswell, chairman of NARP, also called for high-speed runs in the L.A.-San Diego and St. Louis-Kansas City corridors.

Ironically, the same day that Volpe announced the skeleton network to be run by the $40 million corporation, $98 million of federal funds went up in smoke when a space-observatory carrying rocket misfired at Cape Kennedy.

December 10 Rail Strike Threatened

Four unions will be free to strike the nation's railroads at 12:01 A. M. Thursday. The Railway and Airline Clerks, United Transportation Union, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, and Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union are involved. The first-named has promised to go ahead with the strike. Predictions are that it will be short - lived, with Congress acting quickly to restore service.

Coming in future issues: Needed--A San Diego to Vancouver through train (in next issue).
How to travel by train in Mexico (in a future issue).
Plus many more helpful hints on how to keep passengers off your trains.

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

(Each issue this department will bring you news and anecdotes of interest to the beleaguered commuter and the fan of unusual public transportation.)

* * *

New York Commuters Trapped in Tunnel Again

New York has had more than its share of commuting woes in recent months. The most recent incident to make headlines occurred the night of Nov. 25 when a fire broke out in the engine of a Penn Central train northbound in a tunnel beneath Park Avenue. Trapped in the smoke were about 1000 commuters. No fatalities occurred. Power was out for almost two hours.

New Operators for San Francisco Cable Cars

Twenty-eight new conductors and gripmen for the S. F. Muni cable cars have just graduated from training in empty cars and are now working on regular runs. It takes near 40 days to break in a new man, including classroom instruction followed by a written test on all aspects of cable cars.

New Trolley Bus on the San Francisco Muni?

Trolley bus number 570 looks brand new, but it's only a new paint job in Muni's recently adopted color scheme of red, gold, and silver. A new fleet of diesel buses also appear in these colors, while the rest of the Muni array of buses, streetcars, and trolley buses still carry the green and cream trim.

Incidentally, several foreign manufacturers are anxious to bid on the job of supplying new streetcars for S.F. More about that in a future issue.

COMMUTE TRAINS UNAFFECTED BY RAILPAX?

The National Rail Passenger Corporation is supposed to run intercity trains and have no jurisdiction over commute runs. However, a hassle may arise over just how one defines a commute train. Accord-

ing to the law, they are short-haul in metropolitan and suburban areas, usually characterized by reduced fare, multiple-ride and commutation tickets and by morning and evening peak periods operation. Some industry observers feel this definition is vague.

LETTERS

CLEVER TRAVELLER

I am a long time rail fan and still do quite a lot of travelling by rail. As a matter of fact, over the last four days I went to San Diego via Santa Fe thru Barstow and Los Angeles and return, which brought my total rail mileage this year to 8,948 so far.

Gene Theleen

San Francisco, Calif.

(Ingenious railfans have discovered the trick of getting between S.F. and L.A. overnight -- since the demise of the SP Lark -- by taking the San Francisco Chief to Barstow in the desert N.E. of L.A. and then awaiting the Super Chief-El Capitan westbound from Chicago for the 4-hour run into Los Angeles. Coming back, the connection is made with less waitover. But starting next May 1 there will be no way at all of making this trip by rail, either day or night, if the initial Railpax plan is not altered before then.-Ed.)

HOW TO KILL A PASSENGER TRAIN No. 1 of a series

With this feature we present helpful advice to rail executives faced with the problem of people wishing to ride their trains. We all know that passengers do not turn a profit (ask the airlines; they know), only freight does--and sometimes not even that. In these difficult times every little discouragement to passengers helps. First step: shun all credit cards. Don't use Master Charge, Bankamericard, or even Rail Travel Credit Card. Demand spot cash. Don't take a check unless it's from a local bank. In disgust the passenger far from home and low on cash will rush to the nearest airline or bus, who all give credit.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"Since it takes only a fourth as much thrust to move a railway car on steel rails as it does to move a rubber-tired vehicle on concrete, a modern train requires only about fifteen relatively pollution-free horsepower per passenger to perhaps ten times that for a pollution-belching auto. One highway lane can handle 1,200 cars, or perhaps 2,000 passengers, an hour—compared to 40,000 passengers an hour on a single railroad track."

--Tom Wicker, N. Y. Times, Dec. 1, 1970

"The federal government's widely-advertised cure for the ailing passenger trains will result in the wholesale amputation of almost all intercity rail passenger service on the West Coast."

--San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 3, 1970

"Certainly at the least, the East Coast and West Coast corridors, and the belt of cities along the underbelly of Lake Erie to Chicago, should soon have a new generation of high-speed trains."

--Christian Science Monitor, Dec. 3, 1970

FREUDIAN SLIP OF THE MONTH ***

"Penn Central has opened, at Weehawken, N.J., a new piggybank facility..."

--News item of new TOFC facility by the bankrupt PC, Railroad Magazine, Dec.

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